

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Commission's Vision leaves EU fisheries and aquaculture at a dead end

Despite strong calls from EU co-legislators and the sector, the Commission has failed to deliver a targeted revision of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

A future for fisheries and aquaculture requires reforms, not yet another clever strategy.

Brussels, 20 October 2026

Published today, the European Commission's Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040 sets out a 15-year framework to address the sector's structural challenges and secure its long-term sustainability and competitiveness. Yet despite raising expectations of change, it makes no commitment to a targeted CFP revision. The policy's last comprehensive reform was in 2013, leaving the CFP reform more than three years overdue against its customary 10-year cycle. As things stand, the current framework is shockingly set to remain in place until 2040, 27 years after its adoption.

President von der Leyen has repeatedly called for Europe to *move from words to action*. Nowhere is the gap between words and action more glaring than in fisheries and aquaculture. Fleets and seafood production are shrinking, fishing jobs are disappearing and aquaculture is stagnating. Producers and workers across Europe are asking for solutions that make a difference now, not another strategy that leaves the basic framework untouched. Furthermore: by not proposing a CFP revision, the Commission distances itself from the alarming conclusions of its own April 2026 evaluation, while everybody expected that Vision 2040 would be informed by this very diagnosis.

The Commission appears to place its response in better implementation and secondary legislation. But these cannot substitute for legislative reform where the policy framework itself needs to change. The CFP must catch up with the realities that have reshaped the sector since 2013, including climate change, Brexit and the geopolitical and energy crises. It must also address Europe's growing food security gap, the challenge of decarbonisation and unworkable rules such as the landing obligation. At the same time, the EU must create the conditions for aquaculture to fulfil its potential as a strategic contributor to EU production, reducing reliance on imports and strengthening the resilience of the EU supply chain.

Without a targeted CFP revision, the rest of the Vision loses credibility. Its proposals risk painting an idealistic, even fanciful picture of the future—one detached from the sector's needs today.

With regard to aquaculture, the commitment to present a proposal by the end of 2027 to address obstacles arising from licensing, permitting and the regulatory framework is welcome. This initiative must deliver genuine simplification, greater regulatory coherence and a more predictable environment for investment and the development of aquaculture projects across Europe. However, the Vision falls short of demonstrating

similar ambition when it comes to extending mandatory consumer information requirements, a long-standing request of the sector, particularly to prepared and preserved fishery and aquaculture products. While the possibility of considering such an extension is mentioned, the absence of a clear commitment to take concrete action is regrettable.

Javier Garat, President of Europêche, said:

‘We are profoundly disappointed and frustrated by the Commission’s failure to advance the fisheries reform the sector urgently needs. A Vision without CFP revision is a dead letter and, without concrete measures, an empty gesture.’ He continued: ‘No fisher is proud of the current CFP. Failure to act will only deepen social tensions, even more when a change of course was promised by the new Commission. For too long, food producers have felt ignored and abandoned. Unless the Commission changes course, their frustration will deepen and fuel anti-EU movements.’

Livia Spera, General Secretary of ETF, said:

‘There were high expectations that Vision 2040 would finally propose a balanced approach to EU fisheries, giving the social dimension the prominence it has long been denied. Although we welcome the commitment to integrate STCW-F safety training standards into EU law by spring 2028, the few actions proposed will not deliver the results needed to improve working conditions, safety, and the attractiveness of fisheries jobs. Without a targeted review of the CFP that addresses specific rules and measures, a truly social CFP remains out of reach. Furthermore, we have repeatedly expressed our deep concern regarding the situation of fisheries workers in specific regions such as the Mediterranean, and we are deeply disappointed by the lack of any substantial proposals to reverse this decline.’

Elli Tsiforou, Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca, said:

‘The Commission must secure a policy framework that gives producers the confidence and conditions to invest, remain competitive and supports continued production across Europe’s fisheries and aquaculture sectors. As the EU fleet shrinks, fishing jobs vanish and aquaculture stagnates, there is an urgent need to reassess the current policy approach. While repeatedly asked for changes, these calls did not meet concrete and meaningful responses. The Commission must ensure that its policies support the long-term viability, resilience and competitiveness of European fisheries and aquaculture.’

Enrico Somaglia, Secretary General of EFFAT, said:

‘While it is encouraging that the Vision recognises safe and attractive working conditions and quality jobs as essential to unlocking the full potential of the aquaculture sector, the proposed actions lack the ambition needed to deliver meaningful change. A robust legislative framework is essential to turn this ambition into reality. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) must be revised to establish a stronger and more coherent policy framework that supports the development of European aquaculture, promotes quality employment and safe working conditions, and ensures that economic competitiveness goes hand in hand with social progress and environmental sustainability.’

Given the Commission's failure to commit to legislative reform, the sector looks to the Council and the European Parliament to press for action. As such the Parliament stated that should the Commission fail to present concrete legislative proposals by the end of 2026, it reserves the right to launch a legislative own-initiative report under Article 225 TFEU, requesting the Commission to submit appropriate proposals addressing the concerns raised.

Europêche, ETF, EFFAT and Copa-Cogeca reiterate their call for an urgent, targeted revision of the CFP. Reform must better balance environmental, economic and social sustainability; enable fleet renewal and investment; simplify rules and reduce administrative burdens; make fishing careers more attractive; and support a competitive, resilient European seafood supply chain.

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